

Ceres Alumni Association Gymnasium and Museum

Ceres Alumni Association Federal Funding Announcement

August 16, 2005

Ceres, Virginia

It is my pleasure to announce this afternoon that the U.S. Congress has agreed to my request to provide a significant award of federal funding to support a major community development project which will benefit the residents of Ceres and enhance the tourism economy here.

In March of 2003, I was approached by Bill Hubble, a member of the Ceres Alumni Association, about the Association's efforts to restore the old gymnasium and agriculture building located in Ceres. He informed me that both the gym and the agriculture building had fallen into great disrepair and were no longer safe or useable. Once advised of the group's desire to restore the gym for use as a community indoor exercise area and to transform the former agriculture building into a museum, I immediately set about finding ways to support this worthy project.

A few days later, my office contacted the Ceres Alumni Association about submitting a request for federal funding to renovate the gymnasium and agriculture building. After obtaining the pertinent information from the Association, I submitted a funding request to obtain federal monies for the project. And today, I am pleased to announce that the Congress has honored my request and has appropriated \$120,000 in federal funding for the Ceres Alumni Association Gymnasium and Museum project. The federal funding was included in highway legislation which was signed into law by the President just last week.

Since 2000, when the Ceres Alumni Association was founded by 29 former Ceres School students, an impressive amount of work has been performed to stabilize and improve the two structures. Both buildings now have new roofs, new heating and water service. This work has been financed through the Alumni Association's numerous fund-raisers, private donations and a \$50,000 grant from the Hugh I. Shott, Jr. Foundation. In addition, the agriculture building, which is now called the Henry C. Groseclose FFA and Agriculture Museum, has been repainted. New electrical wiring has been installed, and a handicap access ramp has also been constructed at the Groseclose building.

The gymnasium, which has been renamed the George H. Peery, Sr. Center, has undergone several renovation projects as well. The basement of the building has been transformed into a state-of-the-art Fitness Center, complete with 13 Nautilus exercise machines. The locker room facilities have been renovated into a fully functioning kitchen with new appliances and new cabinetry. The interior of the Peery Center has also been repainted.

With this impressive amount of work already complete, a great deal still remains, and the federal funding which I am announcing today will be used to continue the restoration of the Peery Center and Groseclose Museum.

Immediate plans for the two buildings include the replacement of the gymnasium floor which has significant termite damage. New restroom facilities will be installed at the Groseclose facility, and the interior of the Museum will be painted and prepared for historical and cultural exhibits which are planned for the space. Outside, the deteriorating walkways, porch and steps on the two buildings will be repaired. An outdoor walking trail will also be constructed at the site.

Already, the Peery Center is becoming an important community facility for the residents of Ceres. The Fitness Center is providing the community with an appropriate place to stay active and get healthy, while at the same time interacting with neighbors in a convenient location. But the full potential of the Peery Center, and in particular the Groseclose Museum, has yet to be realized.

Once completed, the Peery Center will provide residents with a comprehensive exercise facility with a wide range of amenities. In addition, the center will be an appropriate place for community meetings and get-togethers, including class reunions for the alumni of the Ceres School.

The Groseclose Museum will also enrich the community of Ceres by serving as a new tourist attraction. Earlier this month, I announced a significant award of federal funding to launch a far-reaching tourism initiative in Bland County. The Groseclose Museum would complement these efforts by providing historical and cultural exhibits about Bland County and the Southwest Virginia region which will attract visitors.

I want to express my appreciation to the members of the Ceres Alumni Association who brought this outstanding community development project to my attention. In particular, Betty and Bill Hubble and Lorree Waddle have worked closely with my office in achieving the success which I am announcing today. I thank them for their dedication to the development of the Peery Center and the Groseclose Museum which will greatly benefit the community of Ceres.

I thank everyone here for the contributions they have made to this success, and I look forward to soon visiting the completely restored George H. Peery Center and Henry C. Groseclose FFA and Agriculture Museum.